IRF DA'WAH TRAINING PROGRAMME

Concept of God in Christianity

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I) INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY:

Christianity is a Semitic religion, which claims to have nearly 1.2 billion adherents all over the world. Christianity owes its name to Jesus Christ (peace be on him). The Holy Bible is the sacred scripture of the Christians:

a) The Bible is divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the Holy Scripture of the Jews and contains records of all the prophets of the Jews (all of whom came before Jesus (pbuh).

The New Testament contains records of the life of Jesus (pbuh).

b) The complete Bible, i.e. the Old Testament and the New Testament put together, contains 73 books. However, the Protestant Bible i.e. the King James Version, contains only 66 books as they consider 7 books of the Old Testament to be 'apocrypha', i.e. of doubtful authority.

Therefore the Old Testament of the Catholics contains 46 books and that of the Protestants 39 books. However the New Testament of both these sects contains 27 books.

II) POSITION OF JESUS (PBUH) IN ISLAM:

(i) Islam is the only non-Christian faith, which makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus (pbuh). No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus (pbuh).

(ii) We believe that he was one of the mightiest Messengers of Allah (SWT).

(iii) We believe that he was born miraculously without any male intervention, which many modern day Christians do not believe.

(iv) We believe that he gave life to the dead with God's permission.

(v) We believe that he healed those born blind, and the lepers with God's permission.

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III) CONCEPT OF GOD IN CHRISTIANITY:

One may ask, if both Muslims and Christians love and respect Jesus (pbuh), where exactly is the parting of ways? The major difference between Islam and Christianity is the Christians' insistence on the supposed divinity of Christ. A study of the Christian scriptures reveals that Jesus (pbuh) never claimed divinity. In fact there is not a single unequivocal statement in the entire Bible where Jesus (pbuh) himself says, "I am God" or where he says, "worship me". In fact the Bible contains statements attributed to Jesus (pbuh) in which he preached quite the contrary. The following statements in the Bible are attributed to Jesus Christ (pbuh):

"My Father is Greater than I."
[The Bible, John 14:28]

"My Father is Greater than all."
[The Bible, John 10:29]

"…I cast out devils by the spirit of God…."
[The Bible, Mathew 12:28]

"…I with the finger of God cast out devils…."
[The Bible, Luke 11:20]

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgement is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me."
[The Bible, John 5:30]

The Mission of Jesus Christ (pbuh) – to Fulfill the Law:

Jesus (pbuh) never claimed divinity for himself. He clearly announced the nature of his mission. Jesus (pbuh) was sent by God to confirm the previous Judaic law. This is clearly evident in the following statements attributed to Jesus (pbuh) in the Gospel of Mathew: 5:17

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

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"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."
[The Bible, Mathew 5:17-20]

God Sent Jesus (pbuh):

The Bible mentions the prophetic nature of Jesus's mission in the following verses:

"... and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which has sent me."
[The Bible, John 14:24]

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."
[The Bible, John 17:3]

Jesus Refuted even the Remotest Suggestion of his Divinity.

Consider the following incident mentioned in the Bible:

"And behold, one came and said unto him, 'Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?'

And he said unto him, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' "
[The Bible, Mathew 19:16-17]

Jesus (pbuh) did not say that to have eternal life, the eternal life of paradise, man should believe in him as Almighty God or worship him as God, or believe that Jesus (pbuh) would die for his sins. On the contrary he said that the path to salvation was through keeping the commandments. It is indeed striking to note the difference between the words of Jesus Christ (pbuh) and the Christian dogma of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus (pbuh).

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Jesus (pbuh) of Nazareth – a Man Approved of God:

The following statement from the Bible supports the Islamic belief that Jesus (pbuh) was a prophet of God.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

[The Bible, Acts 2:22]

The First Commandment is that God is One:

The Bible does not support the Christian belief in trinity at all. One of the scribes once asked Jesus (pbuh) as to which was the first commandment of all, to which Jesus (pbuh) merely repeated what Moses (pbuh) had said earlier:

"Shama Israelu Adonai Ila Hayno Adonai Ikhat".

This is a Hebrew quotation, which means:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

[The Bible, Mark 12:29]

It is striking that the basic teachings of the Church such as Trinity and vicarious atonement find no mention in the Bible. In fact, various verses of the Bible point to Jesus's actual mission, which was to fulfill the law revealed to Prophet Moses (pbuh). Indeed Jesus rejected any suggestions that attributed divinity to him, and explained his miracles as the power of the One True God.

Jesus (pbuh) thus reiterated the message of monotheism that was given by all earlier prophets of Almighty God.

NOTE: All quotations of the Bible are taken from the King James Version.

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IV) CONCEPT OF GOD IN OLD TESTAMENT:

(i) The following verse from the book of Deuteronomy contains an exhortation from Moses (pbuh):

"Shama Israelu Adonai Ila Hayno Adna Ikhad"

It is a Hebrew quotation which means:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"
[The Bible, Deuteronomy 6:4]

The following verses are from the Book of Isaiah:

(ii) "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour."
[The Bible, Isaiah 43:11]

(iii) "I am Lord, and there is none else. There is no God besides me."
[The Bible, Isaiah 45 : 5]

(iv) "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me."
[The Bible, Isaiah 46:9]

(v) Old Testament condemns idol worship in the following verses:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."
[The Bible, Exodus 20:3-5]

(iv) A similar message is repeated in the book of Deuteronomy:

"Thou shalt have none other gods before me."

"Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that in the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth."

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."
[The Bible, Deuteronomy 5:7-9]